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Conspiracy of Voices

Poetry, Writings and Art
By the Women of the
Resistance Conspiracy Case

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Resistance Conspiracy Case

Marilyn Buck
Linda Evans
Susan Rosenberg
Laura Whitehorn

CONSPIRACY OF VOICES: Poetry, Writings and Art by the Women of the Resistance Conspiracy Case

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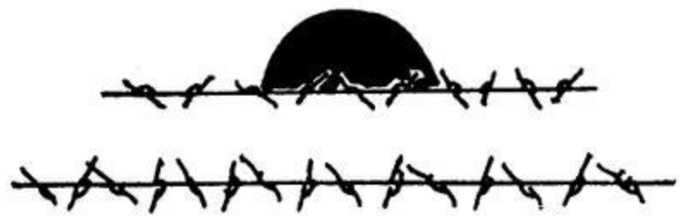
Proceeds from the sale of this book go to support the work of the Emergency Committee and the defense of the Resistance Conspiracy Case.

This book is dedicated to Barbara Brassor and all those who have committed so much time, energy, and love to supporting political prisoners and prisoners of war.



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CONSPIRACY OF VOICES: An Introduction

The poetry and other writings in this small volume represent a tiny fragment of the vast creative energy which exists behind prison walls throughout the world. The four women of the Resistance Conspiracy case whose works appear here are extraordinary women in many ways. Yet, in many other ways, they are not much different from women everywhere. Or, to put it another way, one would hope that women everywhere might understand how alike we and they are.

Marilyn Buck, Linda Evans, Susan Rosenberg, Laura Whitehorn. Political prisoners. Revolutionaries. Dreamers. Lovers of Freedom. Believers in human worth, human dignity, human potential unfettered by actual chains or by artificial lines or stereotypes. Representative of struggles for liberation and justice throughout the world. Some are lesbians. All love women, people fighting everywhere for self-determination and dignity. Singers. Artists. Teachers. Writers. Healers. Fixers. Fighters. Workers.

These four women represent four voices of resistance out of millions which have been raised in defiance against repression on every continent. It is an unfortunate truth that many people will accept the concept that political prisoners exist in other places, but deny that reality here in the United States. While there are obvious propaganda reasons for that unpleasant truth, this is not the place for a lengthy discourse about

those reasons. Suffice it to say that in presenting these writings by (and in some cases about) these four women and other women who have been or are political prisoners here and elsewhere, it is to be hoped that some of this propaganda will lose its potency. As the reality of these women and the evident worth of their ideas are available to be read, and discussed and remembered, many false premises will be dispelled. Repressive regimes depend upon their ability to silence political prisoners–through isolation, torture, disappearances, censorship, criminalization of them and their ideals with the help of the mainstream press–to silence political opposition and resistance.

There are many truths to be found in these writings which concern our visions of the world as well as our visions of ourselves and our capacities to change those things which we know to be wrong. We see things every day which are evil, which cause injury and anguish, which should be resisted and prevented. We more often limit our vision to avoid direct conflict between our knowledge that we should resist these things and our belief that we are unable (for a variety of cogently articulated reasons) to do so. These four women and other political prisoners refused to engage in selective blindness. And for their determination to act upon what they could see and what they knew could be seen, they have paid, are paying an exacting price. (Some political prisoners pay the ultimate price; but the loss of freedom in the cause of political struggle is significant indeed.)

Short biographies of Marilyn, Linda, Susan and Laura appear at the end of this volume. They provide a glimpse into their lives and their political histories as revolutionaries which led to their present circumstances. All four, together with two other long-time activists, Alan Berkman and Timothy Blunk, are presently imprisoned at the Washington, D.C. Jail awaiting trial on charges that they were part of a conspiracy to "influence, change and protest policies and practices of the United States government concerning various international and domestic matters through the use of violent and illegal means." What "international and domestic matters"? The U.S.-backed contra war against the women, children and men of Nicaragua; the bloody invasion of Grenada; U.S. support of South Africa's apartheid system despite U.N. sanctions and worldwide condemnation; the colonization of Puerto Rico; racist police attacks in U.S. cities against African-Americans and other Third World communities; continued U.S.-backed repression of Palestinian struggles for self-determination. The government's "proof" against these six is based on a theory akin to South Africa's notorious "common purpose" doctrine–in essence, evidence of common political association and belief rather than direct evidence of criminal conduct. No one was harmed in any way by the actions said to have resulted from the conspiracy.

All six of these political prisoners have already served unusually long jail terms based upon their political beliefs and actions. In some cases, they have served this time under the harshest, most extreme conditions, experiencing human rights abuses condemned by many

groups, including Amnesty International. Laura Whitehorn is presently the victim of "preventive detention"—she has been denied bail and held in jail without trial longer than any other political prisoner in the U.S. (almost four years). The other five have been sentenced to prison terms so long as to be virtually impossible to calculate by any real life measure (ranging from 12 to 70 years) for politically motivated actions. Such exaggerated sentences are typically given to political prisoners and Prisoners of War who represent revolutionary resistance, who struggle for Black, Puerto Rican, Native American, and other Peoples' liberation, who agitate and act to challenge the fundamental underpinnings of a corrupt system and to prevent its further casualties. Such sentences are <u>not</u> given to Ku Klux Klan terrorists, abortion clinic bombers, Nazis and other right-wing hatemongers. Such sentences, like the charges they face and the prison conditions they endure, are made possible because their voices are not heard.

Linda and Laura have been in jail for nearly five years. Susan and Marilyn have been in jail for more than five years. They have been the object of an unrelenting government campaign to criminalize them as "terrorists" and to deny them the most basic of human rights because of that government-created status. Susan Rosenberg spent 20 months in the underground federal prison known as Lexington, Kentucky "High Security Unit"—an isolation and control unit which Amnesty International called "deliberately and gratuitously cruel." Despite international protests, and a ruling by a federal court that political prisoners were sent to this unit in

intentional violation of their constitutional rights, a federal appeals court ruled in September 1989 that judges should not interfere in the government's treatment of political prisoners. The U.S. Department of Justice has recently proposed new regulations which would greatly increase censorship of prisoner communications and restrict the press from access to political and all prisoners.

The writings contained in this volume are by no means complete. They are, however, lyrical and dramatic testimony to the power of survival and to the unswerving rejuvenating forces of the collected voices of justice and liberation. These words portray many different themes and realities—the unique experience of women in prison; the search for love and dignity behind prison walls; commitment to an inevitable new and better world; freedom dreams; the random cruelty of captors; fears that one's inner core cannot be protected enough and certainty that it is impenetrable. There is humor here. And wisdom. And courage.

I have known some of these women only since they went to jail. Others, like Linda Evans, I have known for many years. Susan Rosenberg is my client. I knew her in New York, long before she was forced into hiding by a repressive F.B.I. unit bent on rounding up and incapacitating members and supporters of Black and Puerto Rican liberation movements. (This unit, known as the "Joint Terrorist Task Force," was the Reagan era's successor to the F.B.I.'s COINTELPRO program, which was exposed and condemned during the 1970s.) I met Susan when she was a student of acupuncture, treating

drug addicts in the South Bronx; when we marched to demand freedom for Assata Shakur (s/n Joanne Chesimard), then a political prisoner and target of F.B.I. repression as a Black woman fighting for the liberation of her people, now living free in Cuba with a grant of political asylum. I have visited all of these women in prisons around the country, talked with them, exchanged ideas, shared laughter, listened to their beliefs and dreams. I have grown more determined that their reality must be conveyed by having their voices heard as loudly and widely as possible.

These writings are as diverse as their authors, yet with many common threads. Susan Rosenberg's journal entries are a dramatic account of the power of dreams. Susan has kept a journal since she was first sent to Lexington's basement. Chronicling unthinkable, mindless cruelties, and beautiful moments of deliverance, Susan's journal excerpts, like her poems, shed unexpected light on the darkness of prison midnights. She writes of the struggles engaged in by political prisoners across the world to achieve recognition and basic associational rights. "Spring/April/Hungerstrike Day 61" reminds us that RAF political prisoners in West Germany were prepared to die for these rights. The FDR government, like the British government, was willing to allow these needless deaths. In "On Walter Sisulu's Release" we find a powerful statement of the African liberation struggle and the ennobling power of its certain victorious future. "Compañera" is a gentle poem about love during war; "Visit" is a moving description of an encounter which opens passageways to another universe.

Marilyn's poetry is likewise diverse. She gives us many tastes of love–its hurts, its humble beginnings, its everchanging landscapes. Such short verses ("I am astonished", "Clandestine Kisses") vie for our attention with critical analyses of the nature of oppression ("Democratic Musings"; "Prayer from the Americas"; "Remembering a 15-Year-Old Palestinian Woman"). And, there are fragile glimpses into the raw nerve endings of prison survival ("Realities In Blue"; "There Is No Grass"), and the undeniable joy and hope inspired by the release of Nelson Mandela after 27 years in South African jails ("February 11, 1990").

Laura is an artist of exceptional talent. Her flowers and colors and patterns of paint and pen are, it develops, matched by an equally perceptive precise and poetic eye, enveloping us as surely as her drawings. She writes of, about, and from a spirit of giving. A poem for Puerto Rican POW Carmen Valentin, serving 98 years for membership in the Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN), with whom Laura spent time in the federal women's prison in Pleasanton, California. A poem to celebrate Linda Evans' brief moment of freedom when granted bail on New York charges in 1985–only to be rearrested when she voluntarily appeared in a New Orleans court to face charges there ("To Linda, Baltimore City Jail, August 24, 1985"). Eloquent statements of hope in the center of despair ("Sisterhood Is Powerful"; "Christmas in D.C. Jail 1989"), inner strengths ("The Quality of Light"; "Fourteen Days, Loss of Privileges"), including the unerring recognition of the need to resist ("The Enemy").

Linda's life has been one of poetry. She writes movingly of the struggle to write, to create behind prison walls. Her essay of her 1969 trip to Vietnam is a stunning tale—the profound impact of the Vietnamese peoples' determination to resist, to win, to turn the scars of war into the furrows of future plantings of liberation. Linda's long years of organizing by her own examples are evident in her essays, and they enable us to see larger patterns and visions in much the same way as the brilliant quilts and weavings she created before becoming a political prisoner.

In these writings, then, one finds many voices. Those of Marilyn, Linda, Susan, and Laura, of course. And the voices resist their present conditions and the governmental policies which put them there. Likewise, in knowing that their own voices are heard, that people know that they exist and begin to understand who and why they are, their causes can only grow and even determine the future. These are the voices of fighters for the liberation of Palestine, South Africa, El Salvador, the South Bronx, Southeast Washington, D.C. These are the voices of mothers, sisters, lovers, daughters, compañeras, friends, seekers of dreams, dreamers, of freedom.

This is the conspiracy of voices that we can hear if we listen. That we must hear if survival is to be a meaningful concept. That we should speak to, and with, and for. All over the world.

Mary K. O'Melveny

A list of suggested readings by and about women political prisoners appears at the end of this volume. These works have been recommended especially by Marilyn, Linda, Susan, and Laura, who have been inspired by those voices and the many others which they represent.

Marilyn Buck

FEBRUARY 11, 1990

Walking
inside walls
3 pairs of feet
whisper softly against harsh pavement
    stifling all growing things
A cold crisp morning
the sun promising to touch us
if only we can stay a while longer.
Time's up
one hour done
We must leave
9:16 A.M.

Across the vast expanse of sea
a continent away
it is 4:16 P.M.
on a brilliant sun-swept afternoon
Nelson Mandela's last footsteps
echo on yards ringed by walls
as he crosses through the steel gates
into the radiance of African eyes and voices
raising in syncopated jubilation
    "Nelson Mandela is free"
        "Free South Africa"
resounding around the world
reaching inside these walls
where we too
stand in sweet company.

CLANDESTINE KISSES

– for Linda –

Kisses
blooming on lips
which have already spoken
and now await
stolen
clandestine kisses

A prisoner kisses
she is defiant
she breaks the rules
she traffics in contraband
womens kisses

A crime wave of kisses
Bitter sweet sensuality
flouting women-hating satraps
in their prison fiefdoms
    furious
    that love
    can not be arrested.

January 1990

THERE IS NO GRASS

There is no grass
no trees
no children throwing stones
into puddles
no laughter
no tears.

There is no peace
no silence
no world of dazzling colors
no sun
no moon
no weather at all.

Living without
blowing winds
gentle rains
day or night
my internal clock
is deprived of Nature's power.

There is only the beat of my heart.

December 1989

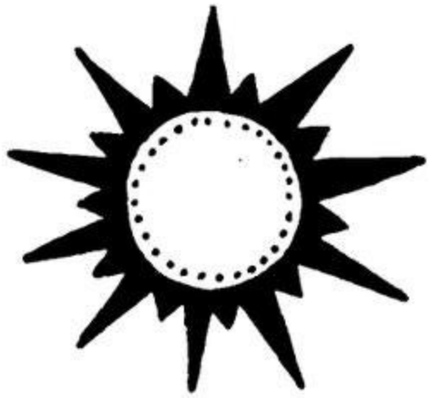
I AM ASTONISHED

I am astonished
that I love you still
my interior landscape
is forever altered.
The groundwater of my being
still runs with the taste of your smile
warm
though now so distant
in a past that burned
only as long as a candle.

Summer 1989

PRAYER FROM THE AMERICAS

After reading Memoria del Fuego
by Eduardo Galeano



Oh my God
so gold and pure
my golden God
in whose name
I offer blood
washing the new world red.

My God of gold
more brilliant than the sun
(oh, but the one God is not
the Sun God
of the Aztecs or the Mayas)

I say to you
the son of one God
died to save our sins
not their sins
and they must pay.

My God
Praise him with gold
Cultures must fall
Destruction must rain
on all who would stop
my holy mission
I, man of the Inquisitions.

November 1988

REMEMBERING A 15-YEAR-OLD PALESTINIAN WOMAN IN PRISON, CHAINED TO THE BED SPRINGS. SHE HAD REFUSED TO STOP SINGING.

Singing songs
Chained
for singing
clear melodic minor notes
welling from sweet young throats
and mouths which have tasted the tightness
of screaming silences

And still songs soar

Songs sung sweetly
soaring skyward
Reeling remembering revealing
souls and spirits
Women singing songs
lullabies lovesongs
and blues songs
chanting cantillating songs
of living life
and dying death
Searching out sounds not yet noted
on bars
not yet ordered on scales
Exploring the breadth of hell
Seeking the expanses of the universe
and freedom

Summer 1988

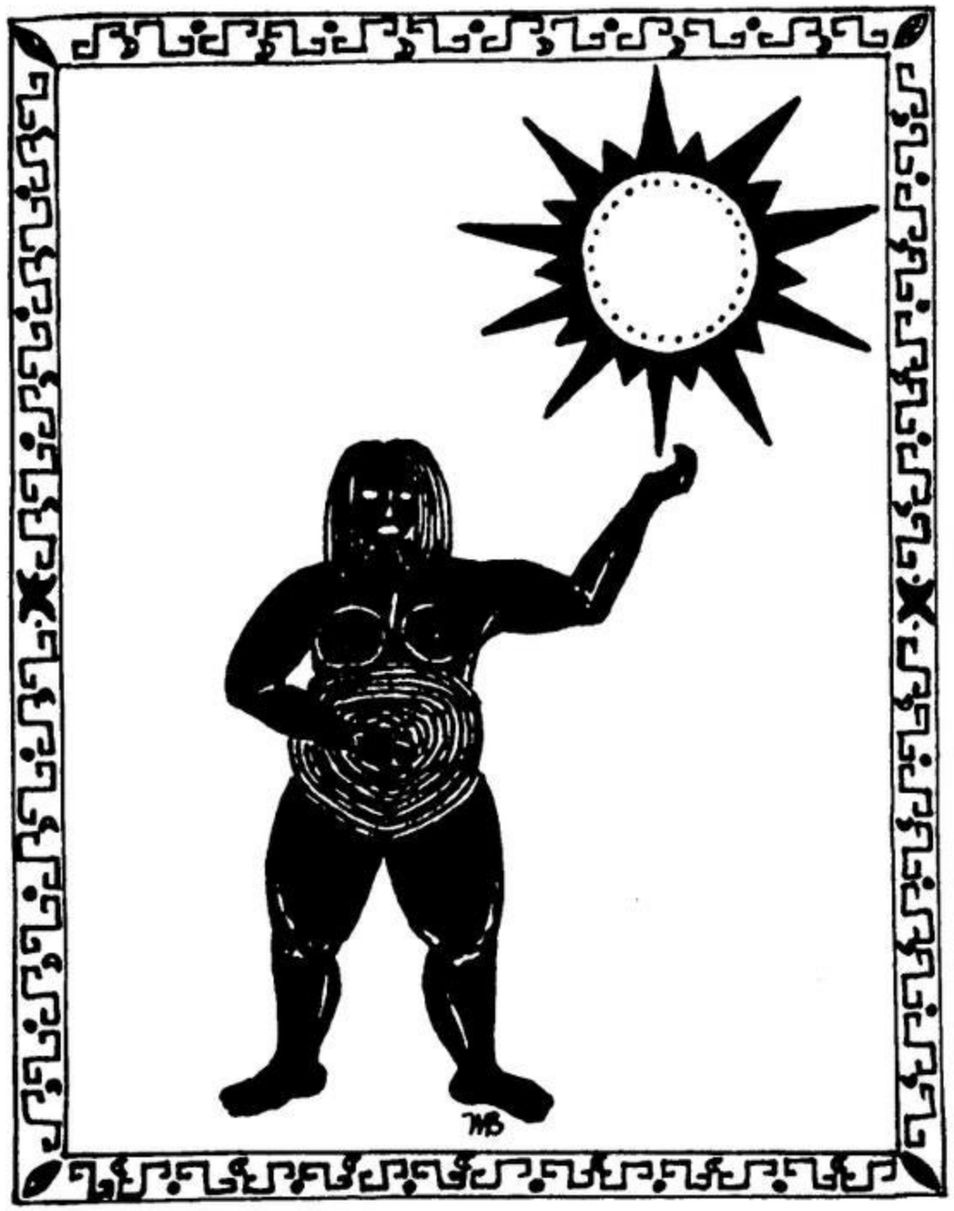
FOR THE SHARPEVILLE SIX

Theresa Ramashanona
Oupa Moses Diniso
Reid Mailbo Mokoena
Duma Joshua Khumalo
Majalefa Reginald Sefatsa
Francis Manentsu Mokhes

Condemned
to death
to hang
till dead
for being

There
among your people
Outraged
that he
who looked
like your brother
would betray you
would betray your black rich land
to the Afrikaner
for one gold rand.

August 1988



TO WOMEN WHO WORK

In the winds of whirling dust
whipping new york streets
a world of women
tossed by the tangible
which determines our lives
young old

old
women sitting on stoops
stooped by lives of labor
bearing children in tenuous tenements
bent over assembly lines
cleaning washing cooking
for old women
who whirl through Bloomingdales
spending shopping searching for
chalices of youth and beauty
an obsessive desperation over depreciation
and obsolescence
oblivious to value

old young women sitting on stoops
too young
babies in arms
singing strident sonatas of dreams
burdened by blues
burning in eyes mirroring expectations
lived only by miss amerikas
dancing dreams of Vogue
and princes

while old women
and young women sit on stoops
needing
slaving in sweatshops in Savannah
  San Jan and Seoul
spinning out the desires of
old women and young women
of class
who need nothing and want everything.

February 1988

DEMOCRATIC MUSINGS
August 1988

Reading the New York Times recently, my eye was caught by an opinion in the editorial section. A U.S. official stated that the U.S. is responsible for the democratic advances in Latin America. He opined that democracy can be measured by the distribution of the wealth. The democratic export of capital has been an astounding success, particularly in the area of natural population control. We should not forget to applaud the economists and finance capital, along with the military which have poured their best efforts into this noble exercise.

It is heartwarming to know that the U.S. is so interested in the well-being of other nations. Can a good Amerikan do less than praise and congratulate the Reagan Government which has done so much? Since Reagan and his cohorts arrived from California country clubs and Central American cabals, democracy has taken great strides forward.

This is not to say that the U.S. has shirked its duties to fight for democracy prior to Mr. Reagan. The U.S. is soundly steeped in the tradition of defending and promoting democracy anywhere it can get its hand in.

First, we should note its fine Foreign Student Program. Countless numbers of young, aspiring military men have passed through the halls of higher learning–initiated into the finest traditions and techniques of promoting democracy among the population. Only the most

advanced in electrical enlightenment, psychological subordination and dissection techniques are taught to the hope of Latin America; thus ensuring that the masses there are experiencing the most modern, though horrifying, results of not supporting democracy and its guardians.

The advances of democracy indeed have been astounding successful. Latin America has made great strides in democratic disappearances, democratic military elections of civilian presidents, democratic poverty, and, in general, the democratic devastation of the economy by yanquiphiles, both military and civilian.

Grenada was democratically dispossessed of its socialist system which had enticed the Grenadian masses by providing education, Medical care, jobs, and by deceiving them with the great anti-democratic propaganda trick --self-determination. Little wonder that the Grenadian people were overwhelmed when democracy returned, allowing them to sink easily, once again, into poverty and social despair.

Facing an uphill battle, the U.S. has persevered in its dream for Nicaragua. It created the contra freedom fighters, a band of democratic enforcers committed to the ballot of the M-16, Remington, and Claymore–aimed at anti-democratic institutions such as the schools and hospitals erected by the Sandinista-led government, which had been so undemocratically elected by more than 80 percent of the entire population of voting age. The contras, aided by their US mentors, have measured

their own popularity by bodies – those of murdered men, women, and children.

Historically, the advances of democracy can be measured by decreases in population. In 1932, in El Salvador, the US first officially bestowed its full attention on the great theosophist and democratic military dictator, General Martinez, who achieved an overwhelming victory. He won by 32,000 bodies–tortured, executed, and imprisoned. Chile also can be applauded for the similar victory of General Pinochet. He, too, successfully murdered more than 30,000 subversive and anti-democratic elements who had supported the popularly-elected government of Salvador Allende, the Socialist. The CIA can be thanked for its tireless efforts on behalf of Pinochet and his pals all over Latin America. These events have been truly outstanding in the democratic process. Surely they will receive proper historical note.

Nevertheless, we should not slight other students of democracy who have accomplished much in the area of democratic diminution of the population, albeit in a more protracted fashion. The Somoza family did well in Nicaragua before the Sandinistas subverted Somoza-style democracy, and the General's well-being. Guatemala was returned to US-blessed democracy in 1954 after the overthrow of the Arbenz government by the CIA. There the very democratic military has dedicated itself to wiping out rural poverty and illiteracy by exterminating the indigenous population who are, of course, responsible for it. Argentina was a shining example. However, it suffered a brief setback when the most democratic military, which had raised the right to

disappear to a fine art, was displaced by the civilian pretender, Alfonsin. (Fortunately, he has not turned out to be truly anti-democratic. He has pardoned the military for its democratic excesses.)

Finally, we must mention El Salvador again. Even after the great democratic successes of the '30s, '40s, and '50s, the communists and subversives have carried on a tradition of attacking this most democratic of nations. But the El Salvadoran military and its "D" squads have consistently striven to make the country free from those elements, most often found to be workers, peasants, and students.

Yes, Latin America has much to thank Uncle Sam for. Democracy has made Latin America a special place, which will not fall into that nightmarish Malthusian pit of hopeless overpopulation. For a while, at least, it may remain a paradise for parasites and patricians. After all, who can deny that democracy is best enjoyed by the few. Too many people, bedazzled by insidious communist concepts of freedom, equality, and justice, ruin democracy.

AMERICAN GOTHIC

Farmers gaunt-eyed
Finally consumed
by the Amerikan dream
  a buyer and seller's dream
  for men with merciless eyes
A wracking silence
Earth turned over
by hands
waving
a piece of paper.

1988

REALITIES IN BLUE

I often wonder if this existence which hangs
    from my shoulders
in a multitude of blues
confessing and congregating a rainbow of
    their own
has swept me unknowing, or protesting,
to a planet to which I do not belong
where a red sun runs from its embarrassment
    into a deep purple daybreak
where the people whirl back-to-back chasing
    their faces
fearing to see or be seen
chanting alphabets in kaleidoscopes of sounds
that echo stillborn
in the silence of days masked in stars giddy-glittery
from their own perceived self importance.
And I shrink in this light
my blues protest at the invasion of such a
    stale yellowness
too bedazzled with itself to be reflective.
Yes, my blues protest hanging from my shoulders
enveloping my heart
as it beats a path still unseen
to the edge of a different reality
where blue meets yellow in a profusion of green.

November 1989

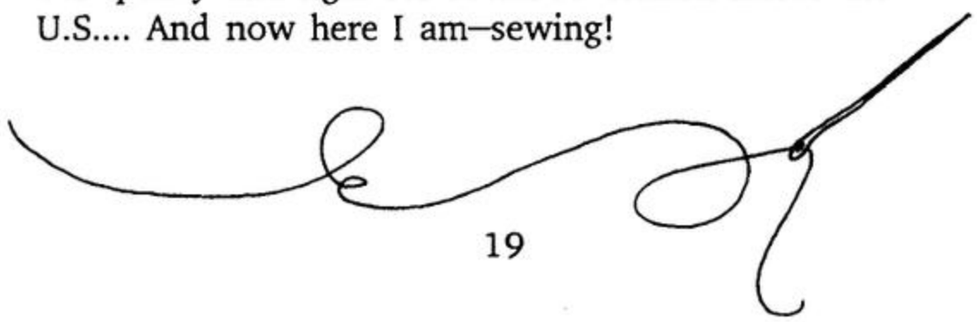
Linda Evans

3 A.M.: SEWING IN RED AND BLACK

It's finally quiet. Sitting hunched over on my bunk, I hear the guard's keys. I pause to see if she'll approach, ready to hide my illegal needle and thread, contraband in this prison cell. Dangerous weapons, this needleful of red embroidery thread!

Stitching: F-S-L-N and Sandino's hat on a bookmark to be sold for the Sandinista election campaign. "Friends of Frente": grassroots fund-raising and support from folks in the U.S. for the Nicaraguan revolution. The goal: $250,000 to help the FSLN knock on every door in Nicaragua. Money for gasoline and car repairs, precious pencils and paper. A stark contrast to the $23,000,000 spent by the U.S. government to buy the elections for UNO and the contras.

I prick my finger–again–and try to avoid dripping blood on the white cloth. The irony of my efforts suddenly hits me hard. For years I've supported Nicaragua Libre, struggling in every conceivable way for an end to U.S. intervention. One of the reasons my comrades and I are in prison is because of our strong solidarity with liberation movements in Central America. We've been accused of armed actions to stop military aid and training for the contras; we've been accused of building a clandestine resistance movement to oppose U.S. policy and fight for social revolution inside the U.S.... And now here I am–sewing!

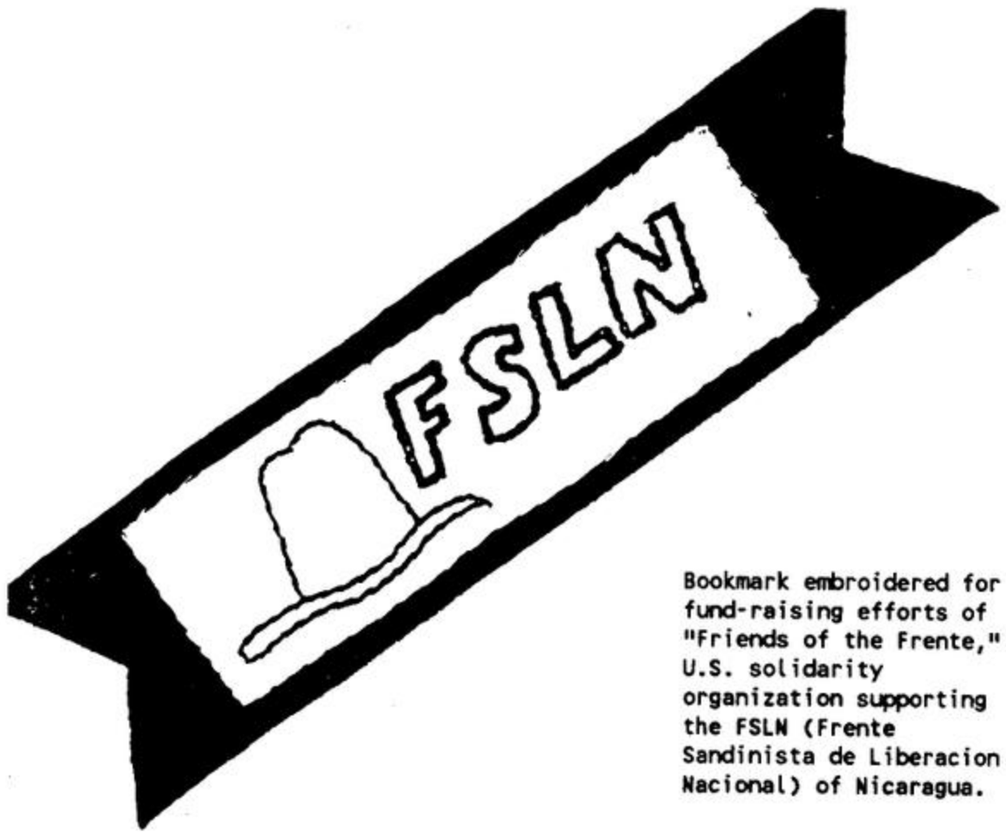


I stare down at my bookmark and lay it aside, starting to pace my tiny cell, stretching my hunched back. I want to scream and yell, pound the cell door, break through the bars. But I know that iron and concrete and the guards' guns in the tower separate me from freedom to act as I wish I could. I do jumping jacks to let off steam, and silently scream as waves of frustration and anger wash over me. I'm an organizer, I'm a revolutionary–not a seamstress! There's so much more that I want to do! I feel the urgency of people around the world suffering because of this government; I feel inspired by their will to win liberation, and I want to add all my energies to theirs, so victory will come sooner.

I sit back down on my bunk and start sewing again. Such a small gesture, these bookmarks. At most, they may raise a very few dollars for the Sandinistas. I think of the drawings of the women in Ilopango prison in El Salvador, the postcards of the political prisoners in Spain and Germany, the ivory pendants carved by the New People's Army combatants in the Philippines, the arpilleras/tapestries made by women political prisoners and their families in Chile. I am not alone, and the enemy hasn't won as long as I can keep fighting. Our art is one small part of our determination to keep our resistance alive.

I smile to myself, ironically. This is what I can do–here, tonight, this contraband art, this bookmark. And tomorrow, join my efforts with hundreds of others in building a revolutionary movement. All over the world political prisoners are part of the freedom

struggle; we contribute however we can. The enemy's prison bars can't stop us, their rules and restrictions can't stop us, losing our physical freedom won't stop us, in so many countries even torture or death has not stopped us. Our resistance slowly grows stronger and, someday, the people of the world will win.
Venceremos!



Bookmark embroidered for fund-raising efforts of "Friends of the Frente," U.S. solidarity organization supporting the FSLN (Frente Sandinista de Liberacion Nacional) of Nicaragua.

FROM VIETNAM TO D.C. JAIL: ON REVOLUTIONARY CULTURE

When I went to North Vietnam in 1969, I entered a country at war on a mission of peace. I represented Students for a Democratic Society in a delegation of antiwar activists who had been asked to receive Prisoners-of-War released by the Vietnamese as a gesture of friendship to the American people. In Vietnam, I felt that I experienced a truly popular culture for the first time—a culture born of peoples' lives, that strengthened them in struggling for revolution. I learned how integrated into everyday life peoples' creativity could be, and I was profoundly affected by their example. We travelled extensively throughout North Vietnam—from Hanoi, in the far north of the country, all the way to the Banh Hai River, then the border between South and North Vietnam.

During these 21 days, we travelled through areas that had been devastated by more tonnage of bombs than was dropped during the entirety of World War II—and the countryside showed it. The land itself was little more than a series of deep craters in most places. At the time of this trip, Vietnamese farmers had taken advantage of a temporary lull in the bombing of the North to fill in some of the craters with soil for rice fields, or with water for fish ponds or rice field reservoirs. In other craters they had planted banana trees, or other types of fruits and vegetables that had been developed to grow in soil permanently transformed

by the chemical fallout of the bombs. We passed through village after village where every single building had been destroyed, including schools, hospitals, museums, and temples that were thousands of years old. I remember walking through the streets of what had once been a larger town. Not even one wall remained that was higher than my waist–except a single pillar of a hospital, painted with a red cross. The remnants of walls were pockmarked from the anti-personnel cluster bombs that exploded and chipped away hunks of buildings–and hunks of bodies. The people I met showed me their wounds, lifting their clothes so I could witness the deformities and pain caused by U.S. bombardment. In every village's Hall of Bitterness were displayed photographs of dead children, survivors with gaping wounds, the rubble of bones that no longer existed.

I spent my days weeping.

Uncontrollably angry, unbelievably sad. Unable to express the depth of what I was feeling–I wept.

But beside the Halls of Bitterness in these villages were Halls of Hope, Halls of Victory. In these huts were displayed the photos and fragments of U.S. bombers that had been proudly shot down by the people of the town, tributes to those who had died, medals won defending the village. Those medals had been won by children as young as seven, and by grandparents in their seventies. As our Vietnamese friends told us story after courageous story, I realized that every person in the

village played an important role in its defense. The U.S. had targeted the population as a whole, their schools, temples, and the country's infrastructure. It was waging a war designed to totally destroy the people, culture, and national identity of Vietnam–a war of genocide. The mass mobilization of the whole people–a Peoples' War–was the successful Vietnamese response. Just as every person played a part in defending their nation, everyone took part in building a culture that helped them stay strong enough to fight and, eventually, to win. Beside the medals in the Halls of Hope, beautiful Vietnamese art was displayed–watercolors and sketches, drawings created with a simplicity of line and figure that is uniquely Vietnamese. The images were of life in a village at war: people cultivating rice with rifles slung over their shoulders, behind anti-aircraft guns, relaxing after battle, tending the wounded. Side by side with these drawings were beautiful flowerpots made from bomb casings, hospital equipment of every description made out of airplane wings, and sandals made from tires of fighter-bombers. Practicality, simplicity, and beauty were inseparable in all these ingenious creations. They were products of a culture of resistance that is part of the daily life of Vietnam.

As we travelled, we stopped at factories built inside mountains, at schools and day care centers that were underground. Our hosts showed us the intricate tunnel and bomb shelter systems that every village created, enabling the people to survive these 24-hour-a-day bombing raids for days, even months, at a time. During

these raids, with cluster bombs exploding, phosphorus and napalm falling from the sky like rain, some of the bravest people in each village volunteered to work on cultural brigades. Teams of two or three people would dodge through open ditches and over fields from shelter to shelter. During their visits, they would read newspapers or perform poetry aloud, tell stories of the bravery of the combatants, retell ancient Vietnamese fables. And they would sing.

Everywhere we went in Vietnam, people would sing. On ferries, in rice fields, town meetings, schools. This was a collective, popular pastime. When we visited a factory, each person would show us their work. At the end of the tour, the factory's machines would be turned off, and all the workers would go with us to the dining hall, where we should share green tea and perhaps some fruit. And the whole factory would sing. This would be a special occasion, in honor of their new American friends. But it was also a common occurrence, repeated often when the workers couldn't return to their homes because of bombing raids. And every evening, no matter what size village we stayed in, the people gathered to perform skits or choral sings–and once even a formal theatrical play, complete with precious electricity and a song composed in our honor.

Creating a revolutionary culture was part of everyone's daily life. It wasn't a commodity to be bought and sold or controlled by those who could pay for advertising. In Vietnam, many forms of art were recognized and valued–from painting, acting, and singing to the art of making bombshells into flowerpots or delicate combs for

women's hair. This was a culture born of people's resistance, woven inseparably into the fabric of daily life–and this culture of resistance gave the Vietnamese people the strength, hope, and endurance to survive and go on to drive the U.S. out of their country.

In the 20 years that have passed since my trip to Vietnam, I've witnessed and participated in many efforts to build revolutionary culture in this country. Performers like Bernice Reagon and the musicians in Sweet Honey in the Rock, Serious Bizness, and other groups have contributed culturally to the struggle for Black liberation. Folkloric dances and conjunto music are part of every Chicano/Mejicano political event; Native American traditional culture is absolutely integral to their struggle for sovereignty. The New Song movement from Latin America, and liberation songs, dances, and plays from Palestine and Southern Africa have strengthened our solidarity and our understanding of national liberation movements in other parts of the world.

As women, we, too, waged an uphill battle to develop a women's and lesbian-identified culture as our struggle for liberation grew stronger. For the first time, we proudly celebrated our love for each other, sang and wrote about women loving women and all the issues that affected our lives. Slowly, a culture grew that could strengthen us to keep fighting, that reminded us of the quality of life and the new society we were fighting for.

But American capitalism has many mechanisms for exerting its control. Outside the context of real struggle for social change, even radical cultural work can become simply another commodity for a few people to profit from. It can become another form of entertainment, where people leave cultural events congratulating themselves on how radical they are because of the political content of the performance. This system will allow us a limited space for our cultural institutions if our culture doesn't seriously threaten the power of our oppressors. It's dangerous: a co-opted culture can lull us into satisfaction by entertaining us without challenging us to act to renew our commitment to fight for the changes we so desperately need.

We've discovered that there's even less space for building revolutionary culture inside prison. In prison, simply creating is often forbidden, and therefore it becomes an act of resistance, because it is an affirmation of our humanity. To create is to rebel against the prison system's efforts to dehumanize prisoners. Creating political art is resistance against the government's efforts to destroy our political identities.

Laura and I were in prison in California with four of the Puerto Rican women Prisoners-of-War. Together, the six of us began to construct a beautiful quilt highlighting the history and culture of Puerto Rican independence. When the prison authorities found out about our project, our cells were raided, the quilt was confiscated, and we were forbidden to work on it. But this quilt will eventually be finished.

Our political art may be declared "contraband," and confiscated or destroyed, but we are determined to continue to resist and to create. Even if we have to smuggle art or poetry out of prison on toilet paper or hidden in shoes, political prisoners <u>will</u> share our creativity with people outside prison, to contribute to building a culture of resistance that will strengthen our mutual determination to win liberation.

Arpillera (small tapestry) made clandestinely using applique and embroidery. Thread unravelled from jailhouse blanket; fabric pieces from jail uniforms, blankets, handkerchiefs. Map of Palestine colored with colored pens, stuffed with cotton from sanitary napkins.

BREAKING THROUGH

Writing. I sit down to write, and I feel panicked. I'm choking, or drowning, gasping for air, suffocating in a stifling room. There are reasons for this.

In the past, words have been my friends. In impassioned speeches at demonstrations, in heartfelt talks with close comrades, in discussions, organizing, singing–words have seldom failed me. (One of the legacies of a little white middle-class education and many years in the school of life is that I <u>can</u> express myself.) But conversations and speeches are of the moment, gone on the winds, different than–writing. For strangers to read, or hear, without knowing the person writing. Relying on words alone to express such complex thoughts and feelings. And written down, in a book, available for anyone to read years from now? Enough to make anyone panic, I think to myself.

But I have an analysis, too. When my sisters said to me, "You <u>must</u> write something for this book, your voice should be heard," I rebelled. "I'm not a writer," I muttered to myself. But then I struggled with all those easy, well-worn explanations of <u>why</u> I should force myself to write. How it's part of women's oppression that we think we have nothing worthwhile to say. How women are taught to be emotional, not verbal or intellectual. How hard it is to reject an abstract, arbitrary standard of what is "good writing," or "good

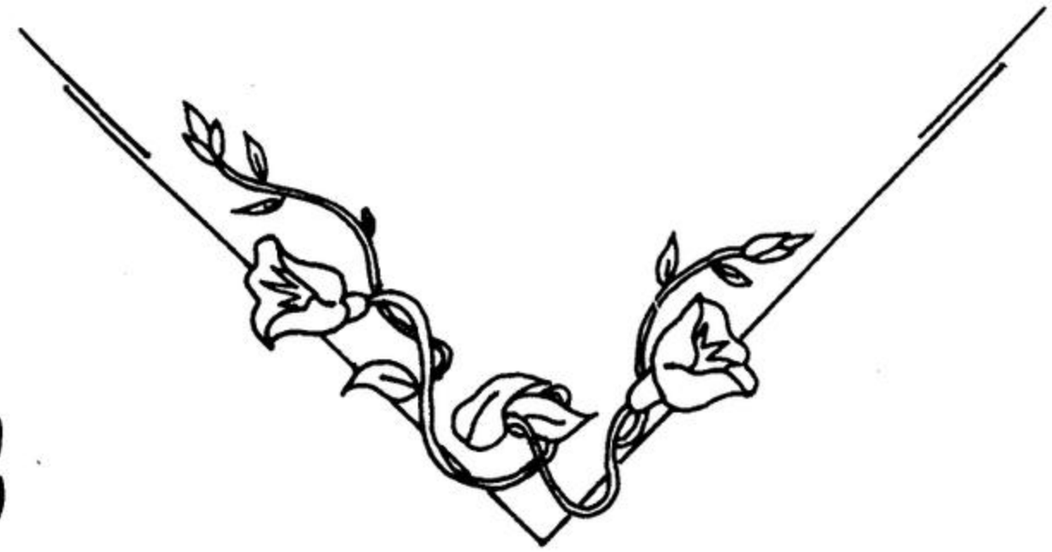
poetry," or "correct politics"—a standard that by definition ignores process, growth, and change. These things I know, and I use my understandings to force me to the writing desk.

But a deeper, more individual process is going on, born of my identity as a political prisoner. I realize I have embraced certain forms of writing, rejecting others. I write hundreds of letters, communicating my ideas and politics, my love, my laughter. I know that my correspondences are changing people's lives because they change my life, too. (This is always a mutual process.) Writing letters is like a conversation, almost like organizing. There's a response, even though it's delayed, from someone else, with different ideas and a different perspective, with new information. I've been able to embrace writing letters—frustrating though it is—because it's a way to communicate with the outside world even though I'm in prison.

But writing for an unknown audience has its own peculiarities. For me to keep a journal would be to break down years of studious avoidance of keeping notes that could reveal my feelings, plans, or other information to my enemy, the state. It feels strange to write only for myself, though I know it could be enlightening to look back on the development of particular ideas or emotional reactions to specific events. And political prisoners have kept journals as a means of survival—to exercise our minds, to record the atrocities of prison life, to maintain our political identities. I've

rebelled against writing a journal or writing articles because I've viewed them as accepting the unacceptable isolation of imprisonment. Since the readers are unknown, or maybe only myself, there isn't even a pretense of dialogue or delayed discussion. I realize that it's this imprisonment, this isolation that I am rebelling so fiercely against, not the writing itself.

Better to view written words as tools with which to organize, a way to keep fighting, a means of communicating free ideas with unknown comrades-to-be. In fact, writing can overcome our enemy's attempts to isolate us, words can be turned against our captors. So—I will write! (But I do wish I had a typewriter!)



PRISON VISIT

Sometimes and who can know when
once twice or never again
from the silence of smooth cold stone
we make sense of the strange way
we are watched by hated men.

We make sense of the unseen eyes
and our eyes fuse and I see in them
that place
where energies and mysteries meet
and the light of your eyes and mine
throws us up
towards the sky.

Sometimes sitting amidst
a space that we carve
clandestinely out of their
criminality and restrictions
your hand in mine
we are drawn to the magic
that runs through our clasp
and the roaring cacophony of repression
becomes a celestial symphony
and I am in a freedom.

Winter 1989

JOURNAL ENTRY
March 5, 1989

I dreamed of the scent of somalia rose. An oil of Africa, and of the smell of cilantro, and cumin, and of an infinite desert with a small patch of irrigated land in which a temporary camp had been set up by a group of African and Arabic women. And they were cooking in large earth pots. And a woman reminiscent of Nehanda was holding a large knife in her hand and the sweat was rolling down her face. It was glistening in the harsh sun and made her color seem almost red in the light amber color of her flesh. And she looked at me and then motioned to come forward and she said, "There will be a shelter for you, I will see to it."

And I woke up with a start because my cell door was open, and a young women was saying, "Susan, Susan, get up, give me your cup, I know you need coffee." And she smiled at me and said, "You look exhausted, you work too much." And I handed her my cup and said, "You are a sweetheart, thanks so much." And I stepped outside my cell all rumpled, trying to stretch my cramped self and another women said, "Susan, where were you yesterday? Are you okay?" And I had to smile because prison, this horrendous jail, is my community of women.

JOURNAL ENTRY
May 12, 1989

Thinking about prison/controls/power/ domination/subjugation...Genocide, colonialism, cultural and psychic death. Yesterday morning the shakedown was brutal. The goon squad beat up a woman for trying to finish brushing her teeth. When they wouldn't let her–for no reason–she spit out her mouthful of toothpaste and saliva on one of the police. If they'd waited 30 seconds, there would not have been a problem. But of course–this is prison. And so, they beat her up, and she fought them back, and I saw four of them have to haul her up the stairs past my cell window and drag her out, into the hall. And they couldn't get the cuffs on. And we were yelling, incapable of doing anything. Locked down.

Thinking about the fact that the collective process of resistance to human abuse is an affirmation of human dignity (like brushing your teeth). Thinking about the fact that that's what they are trying to kill–collective resistance, and dignity.

The jailers are empowered by fear–it seems that control by terror has become an accepted and natural way of life...or is it the lack of knowledge about our reality by those on the outside???

This isn't argentina. or bolivia, or uruguay, or istanbul, or iran, or chile.

No.
This is Washington, D.C.

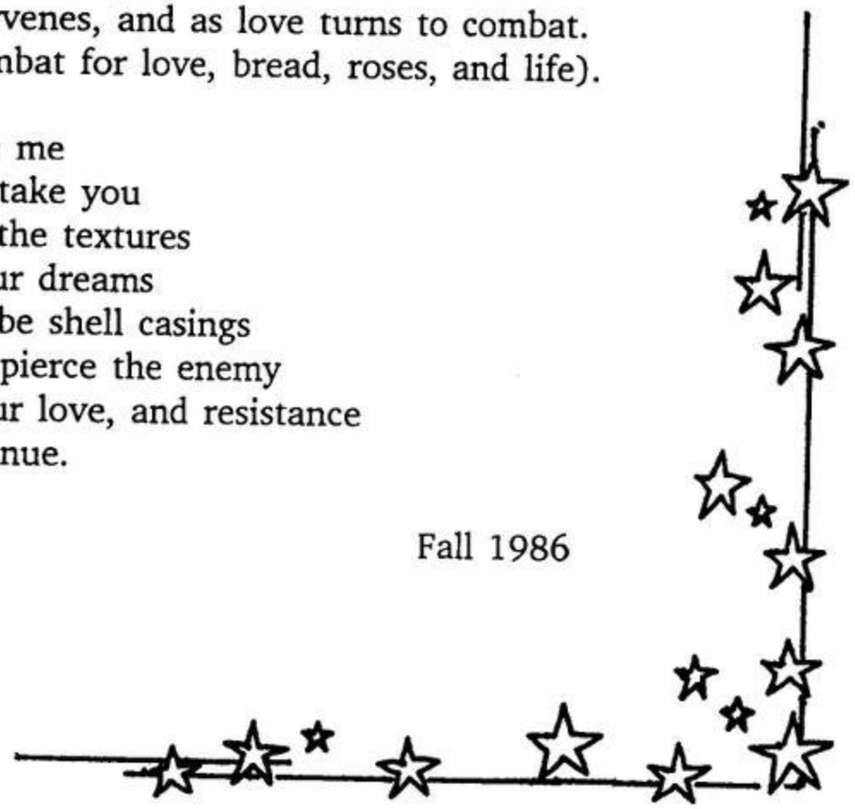
COMPAÑERA

Take me
as you did in clandestine
nights of joy and discovery
wet from intimate rain
from years built with desire

Take me
as you once did
in the quiet of mornings
with tender slow kisses
moving from dreams to consciousness
A new unity, as this war
intervenes, and as love turns to combat.
(Combat for love, bread, roses, and life).

Take me
as I take you
and the textures
of our dreams
will be shell casings
that pierce the enemy
as our love, and resistance
continue.

Fall 1986



SPRING/APRIL/HUNGERSTRIKE DAY 61

There are nights when freedom
is as close as a lover's breath.
When desires and imagination
merge
and the prisoner rides a tempest,
a tidal wave of memories.
A spirit in the dark
a conspiracy of spirit.
Sleep is happily elusive.

But it is cold, and the cold
intrudes, invades, and brings with it
the present.

Two marvelous friends that we
have never met
will soon
die.
They will die from hungerstrike
and no spirit conspiracy will save them.

But in the cold
all those that conspire in the dark
secretive regions of cells,
in and out
will continue.
How it is
will not be in vain.
No.

Spring 1989

RITUALS

Clandestine rituals remembered
from a different time
different space
different life.
We knew not the force of a
constitutionally sanctioned death.
We would not be destroyed.

To reach the clandestine point
we spent lifetimes
disentangling influences
shedding the do's and don'ts.

We lived in freedom's future
(everyone dances or no one dances
spray painted secretly on a wall).
We would not
we will not be destroyed.

Fall 1989

ON THE RELEASE OF WALTER SISULU

No liberation flags
were hung on coffins this day
They blew
and they flew
madly in the wind
slicing
with razor sharpness
at the weakening stays
of a vicious racist decay.

What price freedom?
What incalculable cost?
What sacrifice too great?

In the sprawl that is Soweto
inside the stench
of the white man's fear
of the final elimination
of his hypocritical "burden"
Black Power
Black Political Power
African liberation
triumphs
blowing in the purest,
sweetest smell
of a dream no longer deferred.*

And Nelson will follow
Nelson will follow
Nelson will follow
and a firestorm has started that
will not be stopped.

No flags on coffins this day
and the white european in america
by definition trembles.

Fall 1989

* From a poem by Langston Hughes

LETTER
September 1985

Dear Comrade,

This letter has no specific party to whom it should go. This is a letter of rage and impotence and reaction. This rage has been building for quite some time now and now it is no longer containable. A comrade said that we have to be careful and clear that our rage at what happens to each of us individually be directed towards our collective capacity to resist, and not internally focus. How does one do that? How does one explain or fight from the inside out about watching fascism, repression, dehumanization, methods of counter-insurgency aimed at the most dedicated most filled with love and humanity and respect for human decency? How does one who for so many years was outraged by the violence and waste of a system, who now lives in the very heart of its pit of experimentation–fight it? How many accounts of torture have I read, in Chile, in Iran, in Palestine, and people survived and people did not. But reading is one thing and living it another.

And here we sit calmly eating our U.S. government issued lunch of cheese sandwiches and coffee reading the lies in the newspaper about the Puerto Rican Independentistas on trial in Hartford. Calmly discussing the effects of a hurricane on New York City and as though the thought of a violent storm triggers a reaction on the newest compañera, she starts to talk and her eyes fill up with tears of anger, hatred, shame and fear.

She begins to talk and all the noise, the yelling, the T.V. disappears and we hear only her soft halting voice. And we hear how they beat her (without leaving marks), how they threatened her with her children right there, and how they wouldn't let her take a shower, and how they took her and drove her with a hood over her head so she wouldn't know where she was, and how they told her that no one knew where she was, and no one would be able to help her, and how they had destroyed the others, and that others were talking about her. They told her as far as the world was concerned she was disappeared. She wasn't legal to begin with. And she went on to describe the men, and the place, and her desperation for her children, always she came back to the children.

Sitting at the table as natural as could be one companera took her hand. I asked, "Did they sexually abuse you?" "No." She answered very quickly. But they violated her, and they tried to destroy her, for information. That's torture, isn't it? And then I remembered my skills and said, "I'm a doctor, let me treat you." She said, "Yes, now?" I said, "Yes, now."

When I put my hands on her back, she said, "You know, no one has touched me since August 27, other than to put chains on me." For hours I massaged her and we talked, we talked about the book The House Of Spirits which we had both read at the same time, and we talked about torture and repression and about what had happened to her. And we talked about strength and weakness, and how you never know until the moment of truth comes what you can and will do, and we talked about how you have to struggle to get to that truth.

We talked about how we don't believe our own rules about 24 hours, and holding on. Above it, below it, around it. We talked and she told me how she had a picture of Don Pedro Albizu Campos in her wallet and how for ten hours they screamed at her and wanted to know who it was and where he was. This is in a country that is "sympathetic" to the revolutionary left...but only of certain countries and only in certain instances.

And she told me how her daughter held out her hand to her and said, "I am proud of you, mama." While those days were the worst, the most extreme, it did not end there, it went on for 20 days more, in different jails in different places, in different countries. The specific "crime" this woman is charged with, the specific facts that back up the allegations of her membership in a "terrorist" organization are that she was a principal architect of an action where comrades distributed toys to poor children at christmas time—on Three Kings Day—toys bought from stolen money, where revolutionaries took seven million dollars from U.S. banks without a single shot being fired. A small beginning of the payback for the ripped-off land, labor, resources, and a generation of Puerto Rican people by U.S. colonialism. For this they torture.

Then the count, and we have to be finished, and we are not, it is only the beginning. This compañera will heal, it will take some time, it will not be easy, but it will be done.

Living in the midst of repression can either take your soul or give it back to you. If I ever have a daughter I'll name her for this compañera.

Metropolitan Correctional Center
New York

JOURNAL ENTRY
July 10, 1988

I am in an unending scream, in a hormonal rage, my spirit is in turmoil. The range of response to reading You Can't Drown the Fire: Latin American Women Writing In Exile. The suffering and the survival. The dedication to life, freedom, and justice and the dying, the fleeing, the struggle to reconstruct. And I feel crazy in this unending solitary confinement where the repression is about aloneness. And I identify so deeply with these women's voices, testimonies. We political prisoners, prisoners are in an exile too. We are america's exiled. Exiled into a vast repressive void. And if you looked at me with all this emotion buzzing from one end of my body to the other you would see a quiet woman alone in a dark cell writing. Sometimes I can feel the explosion right under the skin. In reading this powerful book I am struck by the large differences between the experiences of these women. The different

countries, their differences–from age 12 to 80, from Argentina to Guatemala–and what emerges as so apparent is that repression does not discriminate. Life may discriminate based on time, place, condition-based on class, race, sex. But in the carrying out of repression to destroy life there is no distinction made whatsoever.

And I am struck that we are the american equivalents to these women.

We and others.

And I have to stop reading this it's too painful.*

* Written after 20 months of small group isolation and three months of solitary confinement.

THE QUALITY OF LIGHT

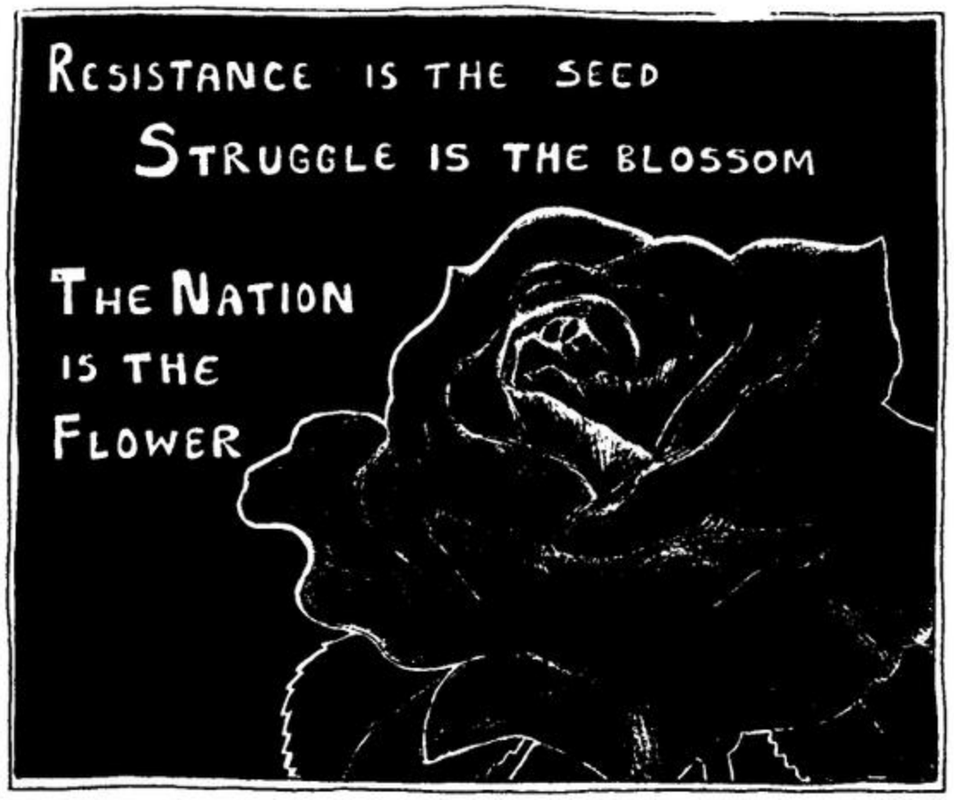
The quality of light
  shifts and changes, blues to greys,
  telling me the time of day
  with no clock.
The quality of light
  filters through plexiglass slits
  in the wall,
  revealing
   the sun rising --
    amber in a blue darkness.
    Snow on the ground,
    bitter weather, cold and clear.

But
I admit
the quality of light illuminates
  not the outer bounds of my vision,
  nor the corners of my cell,
  but the inner recesses
  of memories that live sharp in combat
  against imprisonment
  which tries to darken and dry up
  the life forces–like wind, rain, oceans, mountains,
  as they relate to the prisoner.

It has never succeeded
  and won't now
as long as the quality of light
  emanates from a source the jailers can't control.

The light filters through the windows.
I can't see out,
  but I can see in.

November 1989



POEM FOR CARMEN VALENTIN

This is a corny poem for my comrade,
Carmen Valentin.

Once, when I was underground, I was given
  a magenta wildflower,
  which I put in a jar by my bed.
At first glance, it was extremely delicate–
  a slender, yellow-green stem
  bearing several small leaves
  and one perfect, small, magenta flower.
It wasn't showy, but, like you,
  it was both lovely and beautiful.
It seems strange, almost embarrassing
  to say it, but it made me happy sitting
  there, modestly growing.
And it turned out to be a lot sturdier,
  more durable, than you would have thought
  from looking at it.

As the first flower browned and withered
  and fell, a bud–one you hadn't even
  noticed before–began to bloom and grow
  into another magenta flower.
And in this way, it kept going
  all Spring, and Summer, and into Fall.
We had to move before it died.
Who knows–maybe it's growing still.

It just did what it had to do, and kept on
  doing it, undeterred, making it seem
  the most natural thing in the world.

A perpetual flower.

And it reminds me of you because of the way
you assume that your sacrifice is the
most natural thing in the world–
Your life for the Independence of your nation,
your freedom, the loss of which I know
you feel every day now,
for the freedom of your people
some day.
To you, the wonder of it all is not that
you can face this life in prison
without bitterness,
but that anyone could fail to understand
why you're so tough
and full of hope.

1989

SISTERHOOD IS POWERFUL
D.C. Jail

Brenda has one cigarette, and shares it
with a woman she's never seen before,
who sits on her bedroll,
abcesses freshly bandaged
thin
and shaken.
Sisterhood is powerful.

Lurinda brags she's hard, won't give
a thing away without a trade. But she's
the first to slide
into the cell next door,
to see that the new arrival, withdrawing,
has what she needs
to get her through the sickness.
Sisterhood is powerful.

And I, the communist, have learned
to give not just the easy things
but the hard,
to give what I didn't think
I had enough of,
to give of myself,
the only commodity left to me.

You'd have to see it to believe
how sisterhood is powerful.

July 1988

CHRISTMAS IN D.C. JAIL

Should we live
parsimonious lives
in bare cells
measuring out
pleasures
grain by grain
hoarding love
counting hours
saving tears–
or open up,
let loose,
refuse to become the ultimate commodity
and risk squandering
some resources we may need
for all those long days
and years
to come?

Oh risk it, I say,
give it up,
because hope is not quantifiable
and only grows through generosity,
and prison life–all life–
is labor-intensive:
you have to struggle
for what you get.

1989

FOURTEEN DAYS, LOSS OF PRIVILEGES
D.C. Jail

I don't do well with the prison authorities.
Told to move,
I stand stock still.
"Stand still," they say–
I move.

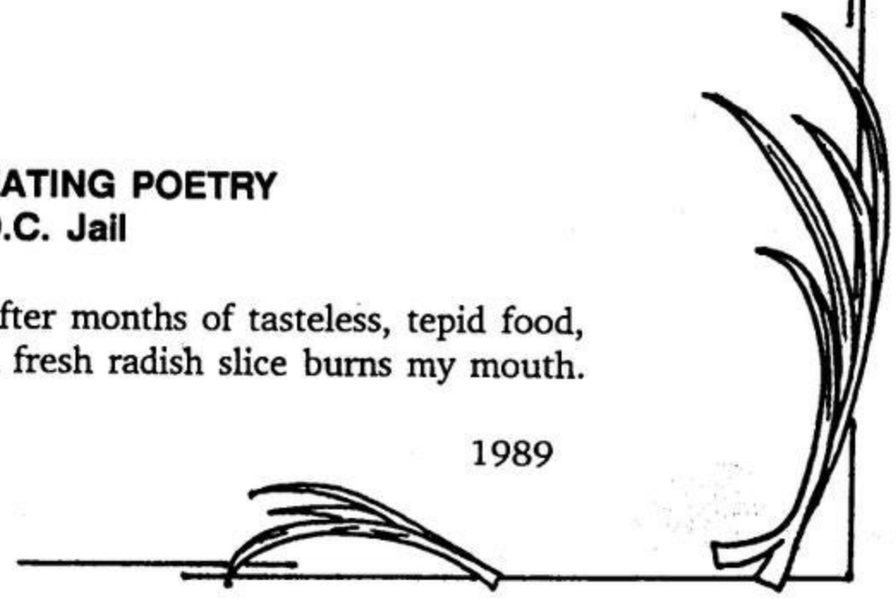
Ornery
Bad
Disobedient
Unrepentant.
I like me that way.

1989

EATING POETRY
D.C. Jail

After months of tasteless, tepid food,
A fresh radish slice burns my mouth.

1989



CLAUSTROPHOBIA
D.C. Jail

Do not think of air–
air clean of smoke, and dirt, and years
of sour meals lingering,
of too many people in pain
and in frenzy.

And don't think of sunshine in fresh air,
because as soon as you do,
your body stiffens,
stretches,
reaches,
yearns to become
the explosion you are accused of,
yearning to explode
so much inhumanity, the walls and bars,
leaving ruins
which would be
tender shoots of growth,
people freed from these structures
of chains,

People smiling with life
and without irony.

June 1988

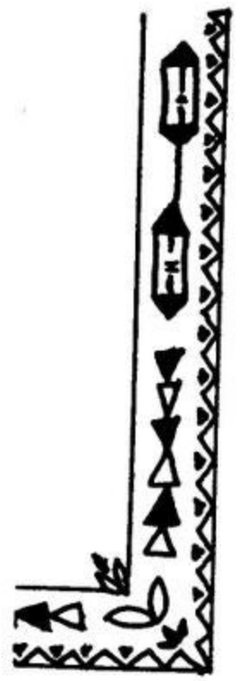
TO A COMRADE AFTER AN ARGUMENT
D.C. Jail

Complexity is hard enough
without the added complications
of trying to fight the state
while being held in the prisons of the state
and being chained
and choked
and suffocated
in the prisons
and the courtrooms
of the state.

So if, at times,
unresolved contradictions
combine with unresolved heartaches
longings
and even breathtaking
exciting
impossible
glimmers of joy,
collide and combust,
lacking the map
to a smoother resolution,
please forgive me.

Sometimes it seems
that apologies are in order
because nothing else is.

1989



THE ENEMY

"An Army spokesman, meanwhile, said soldiers acted improperly when they tied a 50-year-old Palestinian demonstrator to the front of a jeep in Jericho, in the West Bank, before driving off last week. But he said no disciplinary action would be taken."

–Washington Post, 9/5/88

Can someone explain to me
what the inside of an "Israeli's" heart
  looks like?
Is there any light left in it at all,
or is it so dark that human feeling itself
  is obscured–
along with history, and the lessons
  I thought millions of people
  had died
  so that we could learn?

Can someone explain to me
what the inside of an "Israeli's" mind
  looks like?
Has it forgotten, in less than
half a lifetime,
  the cattle-cars, camps, and ovens,
  the deportations,
  "collective responsibility and punishment,"
  brutality so rancid
    the human mind can't bear
    to comprehend it?

Or has the mind, remembering, decided
  (cold as marble mausoleum walls)
to win by domination,
  to vanquish,
  using those self-same cruelties,
  stripping life
    of all its essence, hope, and meaning,
  leaving only greed,
  an army of occupation,
  and hollow, colonial supremacy?

Having grown up
  in white Amerikka,
I'm afraid
  I know the answer.

September 5, 1988

TO LINDA
Baltimore City Jail

A breeze sneaks in my prison window,
carrying a late-Summer aroma
of green things basking and baking in hot sun,
of wildflowers, long since become
familiar, everyday sights,
of asphalt radiating heat
that will be remembered fondly
in colder weeks to come.

But the longings stirred in me
by the breeze with its gift of odors
reach far beyond the freedom I can see
outside my window, in the weeds and grass.

They reach to feet marching
stamping
running
through hot dust
to masses arming, fighting,
in Azania,
to revolution
in Azania.

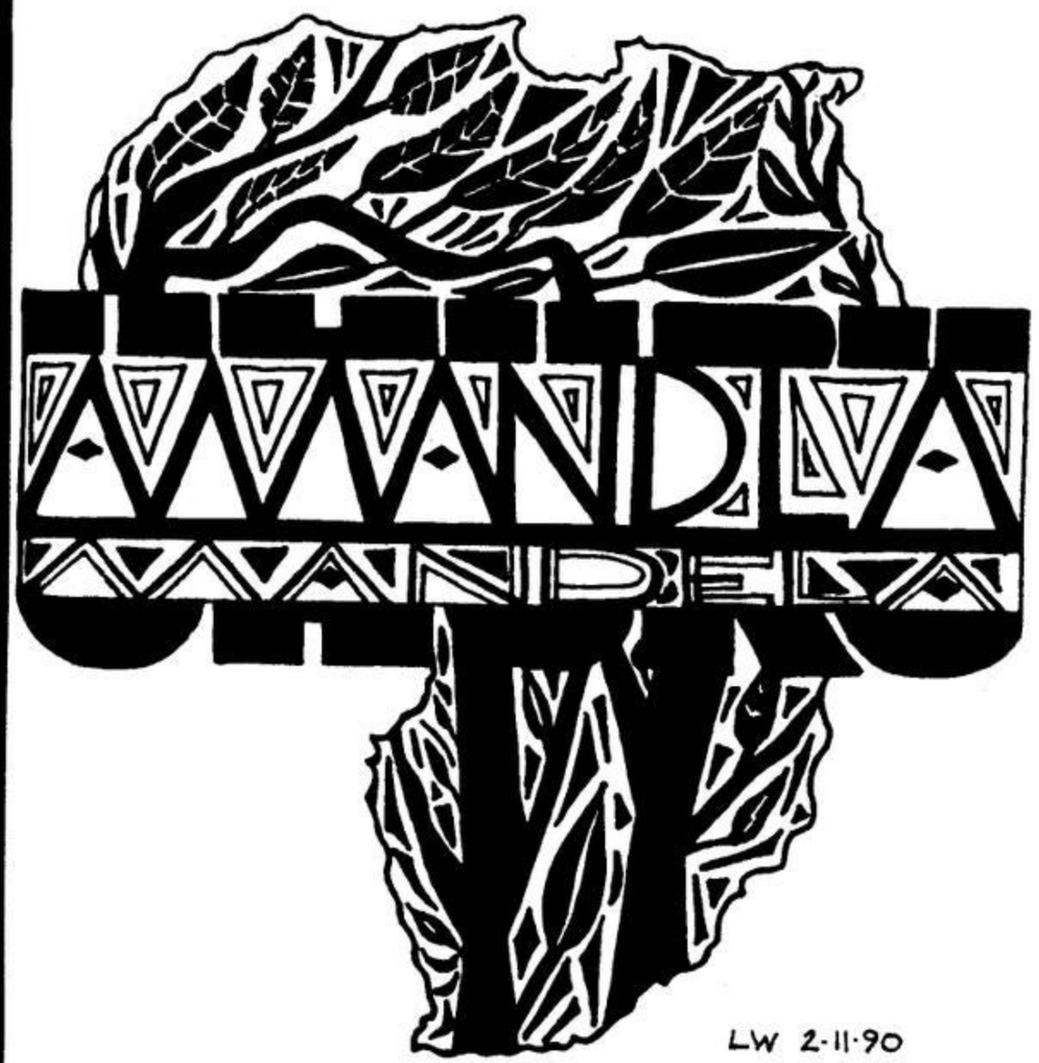
They reach to El Salvador
to celebrate successful actions
carried out by the guerrilla forces
of the people of El Salvador
against marines,
advisors,
imperialists
drunk with power
in El Salvador.

They reach to the streets of Harlem
and Detroit
to chanting
clapping
celebrating
New Afrikan Freedom Fighters' Day
to growing revolution
in Harlem
and Detroit.

These longings are not for freedom
from the walls and bars alone,
but for the freedom
that comes from fighting
for real freedom.

Your spirit, sister, never will be chained.

August 1985



MARILYN BUCK

Marilyn Buck was born in Texas, a segregated state, in 1947. She is the daughter of a nurse and an Episcopal priest, who was active in the civil rights struggle in the 1960s. Her political and social awareness was heightened by her frustration at the limitations placed on her as a woman. It was this sense of inequality which enabled her to understand that racism and domination were an integral part of U.S. society that could not be changed through voting. She became active in protests against the war and racism. In 1967, she left Texas to attend a Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) teacher-organizer training course in Chicago. She remained to act as co-editor of New Left Notes, the SDS national newspaper. She also participated with other women in SDS in insuring that

the issue of women's liberation became part of the SDS national program.

The Vietnamese struggle against U.S. aggression to regain their national sovereignty, the Cuban Revolution and the example of Che Guevara, and the demands for power and liberation by the colonized and oppressed peoples inside the U.S. shaped the political and social consciousness and reality of the late 1960s. SDS became an anti-imperialist organization and supported all just struggles for national liberation, women's liberation, and social/economic justice. Marilyn was a part of this process.

To her, information about people struggling for their liberation and justice is vital to educating and awakening the people of the U.S. After leaving the National Office of SDS she joined San Francisco Newsreel, a radical film-making and propaganda collective. Although she did some film work, she was mainly involved in using films as an organizing aid at community meetings, high school student groups, worker's committees and even in the streets. Seeing the reality of people struggling for their homelands, to educate their people, and to gain control of their own labor and human dignity gave the viewers a sense of the power of collective organization and the will of a people who are not afraid to fight for freedom and justice. Marilyn also found courage and inspiration from watching people, particularly women, who took a step toward their own liberation as they fought to liberate and build their nations.

She also participated in international solidarity groups in support of the Vietnamese, the Palestinians, and the Iranian struggle against the Shah, and became increasingly involved in supporting the Native American, Mexicano, and Black liberation struggles. As an anti-imperialist activist and an advocate of socialism, she, along with many thousands, was identified in the FBI Counterintelligence Program (COINTELPRO) files. Because of her continual support for Black liberation and an end to racism, she became a target of COINTELPRO. The FBI accused her of being a member of the Black Liberation Army (BLA) and, in 1973, she was arrested and convicted of buying two boxes of handgun ammunition. She was sentenced to ten years, the longest sentence ever given for such an offense.

As a political prisoner, she was designated as a "high security prisoner" by the U.S. government and was subjected to extraordinary measures in the name of security. After nearly two years in which she was kept in county jails, which are notorious for their inhumane conditions, she was sent to the control unit and behavior modification program at the Federal Women's Prison at Alderson, West Virginia, where she remained for more than a year. Once she was released into the general prison population she met Lolita Lebron, one of the five Puerto Rican Nationalist prisoners, from whom she learned a great deal about struggle and the sacrifices necessary. She also became a licensed medical technician. In 1977, after more than four years in prison, and repeated parole denials, she was granted a furlough from which she did not return.

LINDA EVANS

Born May 11, 1947, in Fort Dodge, Iowa. Revolutionary and anti-imperialist since 1967. SDS regional organizer against the U.S. war in Vietnam and to support the Black liberation movement. Participated in 1969 anti-war delegation to North Vietnam to receive POWs released by the Vietnamese.

Political/cultural worker in guerrilla street theatre troupe, all-women's band, and women's printing and graphics collective in Texas. A lesbian, active in the women's liberation movement and in the lesbian community.

Organized grassroots organizations against the Ku Klux Klan, forced sterilization, and killer cops. Fought racism, white supremacy, and zionism as a member of the John Brown Anti-Klan Committee. Worked with Southern Africa, Palestinian, and Central American solidarity organizations to raise material aid for national liberation movements to oppose apartheid and U.S. intervention. Built support for Black/New Afrikan, Puerto Rican, and Native American POWs and political prisoners, and the right of these nations to independence and self-determination. Began working to develop clandestine resistance movement capable of struggle on every front. Arrested May 11, 1985: convicted of harboring a fugitive and using a false name to buy four guns; serving a total sentence of 45 years.

SUSAN ROSENBERG

Susan was one of the three women political prisoners imprisoned in the Lexington Small Group Isolation Unit, the first explicitly political prison in the U.S. She was born on October 5, 1955, in New York City. She has been an activist all her adult life. While in high school, she worked with and was greatly influenced by the Young Lords Party and Black Panther Party. She was active in the anti-Vietnam war and women's movements. In 1976, she traveled to Cuba to build a day care center, as part of the Venceremos Brigade in solidarity with the Cuban revolution. She worked throughout the 1970s in solidarity with national liberation struggles–the Puerto Rican Independence Movement, the Black Liberation Struggle, and other worldwide movements for liberation.

Susan is a Doctor of Acupuncture who studied with Black acupuncturists at the Black Acupuncture Advisory Association of North America (BAAANA), a community health center in Harlem, New York, dedicated to fighting the drug plague and providing health care through acupuncture and Chinese medicine.

Stemming from the 1979 prison liberation of Black Liberation leader Assata Shakur (Joanne Chesimard), a massive FBI Joint Terrorist Task Force investigation culminated in 1982 with the targeting of 37 activists in the Black liberation struggle and their supporters. Susan was targeted and later indicted on federal conspiracy charges. She went underground. These charges were later dropped by the government.

On November 29, 1984, she was arrested with Tim Blunk, charged and convicted of possessing explosives, weapons, and false identification. They were sentenced to 58 years in prison. The government's political motivation for this unjust sentence is Susan and Tim's association with the clandestine anti-imperialist resistance movement. They received sentences of unprecedented length despite the fact that they were convicted only of possession of materials and not use of them.

Susan's refusal to collaborate and change her political associations, beliefs, and commitments were a stated reason for the court's refusal to lower the sentence on appeal. This refusal and her associations were the government's reasons for placing her in the Lexington isolation/control unit.

LAURA WHITEHORN

I grew up during the era of the rise and victory of national liberation struggles, so my own hatred of oppression, injustice, racism, and sexism could be channeled into a productive direction: revolutionary anti-imperialism.

I've been involved in struggles for human rights for a little more than 20 years–from the Civil Rights Movement to supporting the Black Panther Party, the Black Power movement, and the New Afrikan Independence Movement, to fighting the KKK and organized white supremacy, supporting the struggle for independence of Puerto Rico. I am a lesbian, and I have struggled for the liberation of women, lesbians, and gay people. In Boston, I helped Black families to defend their homes against racist attack during the "anti-busing" offensive, and I helped to found the Boston/Cambridge women's school. In New York, I worked to expose illegal FBI counterintelligence (COINTELPRO) and was a member of the John Brown Anti-Klan Committee and the Madame Binh Graphics Collective.

A visit to Vietnam in 1975 in an anti-imperialist women's delegation confirmed my belief that socialist revolution lays the basis to fulfill human needs and creativity–including achieving peace and justice.

Over the past 20 years, the intransigence, corruption, and aggression of the u.s. government has made sustained militant resistance necessary. I've struggled to be a part of that, because justice is worth fighting for and the real terrorism of u.s. imperialism needs to be defeated. I've been involved in clandestine resistance

because the government uses the full force of repression to destroy developing opposition.

Since my arrest in 1985, I've experienced this first-hand as a political prisoner: held in "preventive detention" without bail, kept in solitary confinement for much of the time, classified as a "special handling" prisoner, because of my political ideals and because I'm determined to live by them and fight for them.

SUGGESTED READINGS

Assata Shakur, ASSATA, AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY
Nawal Sadawi, PRISON MEMOIRS
Nawal Sadawi, WOMAN AT POINT ZERO
Mila Aguilar, A COMRADE IS AS PRECIOUS AS A RICE SEEDLING
Ashraf Dehgani, EPIC OF RESISTANCE
Alicia Partnoy, THE LITTLE SCHOOL
Leila Khaled, THE STRUGGLE IS MY LIFE
Angela Davis, IF THEY COME IN THE MORNING
Panther 21, LOOK FOR ME IN THE WHIRLWIND
Winnie Mandela, PART OF MY SOUL WENT WITH HIM
Caesarina Kone Makhoere, NO CHILD'S PLAY
Ruth First, 117 DAYS
Helen Josephs, SIDE BY SIDE
Puerto Rican Women Prisoners of War, FLORES Y BALAS
Puerto Rican Women Prisoners of War, HAVE YOU SEEN LA NUEVA MUJER PUERTORRIQUENA?
Ana Maria Guadalupe Martinez, CLANDESTINE PRISONS IN EL SALVADOR
Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, MY LIFE AS A POLITICAL PRISONER
Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, DEATH HOUSE LETTERS
Sedition Committee, WOMEN OF THE OHIO SEVEN
Emma Goldman, LIVING MY LIFE Vol. 1
Nell McCafferty, ARMAGH WOMEN
Donitila Barrios de Chungara, LET ME SPEAK
WALL TAPPINGS: AN ANTHOLOGY OF WRITINGS BY WOMEN PRISONERS

COMING SOON

HAULING UP THE MORNING: Writings and Art by U.S. Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War, with an Introduction by Assata Shakur

Resistance is not a crime!